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THE TECHNIQUES OF POLITICAL ADVERTISING

by Edna Lonigan

It will be good political practice for all of us to follow the day-by-day progress of the advertising campaign for President Truman's "Bold New Program".

Governments and political parties of the Left have learned to use the arts of advertising with a skill far beyond the wildest flights of our business "tycoons". But we the people have not yet learned how to develop sales resistance to political promoters.

Advertising campaigns for governmental spending involve immeasurably higher stakes than any private advertising. They have the further characteristic that when we give our money to the government managers, we get no guarantee of performance and no chance to exchange misrepresented wares. What we surrender is irrevocable.

Up to now we have either ignored the fraud in government advertising, or taken out our resentment in futile criticism. What we need to develop is a cold precise analysis of government promotion policies, such as that which the Securities and Exchange Commission likes to give to promoters of new private enterprises.

Because we failed to analyze the selling campaigns for war, like the Atlantic Charter, and for post-war programs, like Bretton Woods and Dumbarton Oaks, we do not realize how the skill of the government copy writers is improving with each new promotion job. We have "bought" proposal after proposal without attempting to count the cost. But once we begin to study the arts of the political blue-sky spellbinder we help to restore our own curative powers, as a man, bitten by a snake with a venom that enervates, can be saved if he will quickly force himself to get up and keep moving.

II

The subconscious mind is not affected by argument, but by drama.

The underlying drama or plot of the "Bold New Program" is, like all good plots, essentially simple. It is a variant of the universal theme of "Fireman Save My Child". Indeed, this is the plot of public housing, of Bretton Woods, and all the rest. The Administration need only assume the heroic role of fireman, whereupon every critic automatically becomes the shameful villain who would doom children to a dreadful fate.

To make the play successful of course the political copy writer must abandon words that have clear precise meanings, and use fuzzy

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phrases, or better still take familiar, trusted words like "democracy" and give them many hazy meanings. Lenin emphasized this in his famous advice about confusing the vocabulary, but the procedure is basic in all political propaganda.

Soothing phrases, like "free peoples", are helpful. Soporific words, like Mesopotamia, or "fair treatment for investors" or "social security" are even better. But harsh words, like "cost" or "sacrifice" or "effort" are out. They arouse the will, and except in wartime the purpose is to lull people into a dull state of apathy, of will-lessness, as Circe altered men into soulless swine, content to root in the mud.

In the New Program drama, the child of course is the "Backward Area". We have not had a single precise statement of what is meant by Backward Areas. They will never be defined. Clear images provoke thought, and thought is death for a program entirely dependent on hypnotic suggestion.

The State Department, the most dignified if not the most restrained of the agencies which will take part in this huge advertising campaign, has issued a brochure, No. 21 of its "Building the Peace" series, which gives us the most precise story we can hope to get. Nowhere in the six pages of this official ballyhoo is there any specific designation of nations which are "undeveloped". Instead we have the softest words and the pleasantest phrases, to "help the free peoples of the world", or those "tempted in their desperation to clutch at the straw of totalitarianism". Does this mean Asia, Africa, Latin America? Does it include Spain? And the countries behind the Iron Curtain?

"World economic stability" is emphasized again and again -- meaningless, but reassuring. "A better balance in the world's economy" is an equally fatuous but comforting phrase. "Co-operative international action for economic development" sounds well, especially when the harsh word "veto" is excluded.

The State Department blurb says that the task is largely a matter of "co-ordinating" (that lovely word) existing facilities under central planning and direction. Of course the emphasis is ours. Central planning is the death knell for representative government and free enterprise, whatever soothing words may veil the change.

III

As the "helpless child", in the bold, new drama, we now have the pitiful Backward Areas, replacing other characters whose lines have lost punch and whose box-office appeal has slackened. Now we should watch

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the dramatization of a brave new fireman. The rescuer of the Backward Areas is named Technology.

It is difficult to explain the mastery which the word Technology exercises over the minds of collectivist planners. It is a mystique. Only the initiated understand what Technology will do, once it is freed from the harsh control of businessmen.

Technology, as used in the literature of Point Four, is simply another name for Superman. He solves every problem without the bother of practical experience and training. Technology is subject to no mundane restraints, provided only -- as in all voodoo -- that his audience is rapt and sympathetic. Technology and magic are the same thing in all Russian literature, from Ilin's primer on. They are identical in the writings of all intellectuals under Soviet influence. Nothing is more pathetic than to see our simple engineers and down-to-earth scientists trying to wrestle with the New Technology.

The government, says this Department of State brochure, is going to subject modern technology to "moral responsibility". But how does invoking the power of the State make Technology more moral? Putting all the technicians in Russia under the State did not raise moral standards to any noticeable degree. Indeed our State Department itself maintains that in Russia and China the effect has been exactly opposite.

But under our own politicians it will somehow all be different. There will be no shadow of the old imperialism, no "exploitation for foreign profits". Does that mean the American people will not be repaid for the earnings they put into these investments? Or does it merely mean that in the New Imperialism all the benefits will go to the five percenters?

The WPA made the Federal Government the employer of virtually all social workers. The medical care programs offer the same bait to young doctors, dentists, and nurses. Now young engineers, chemists, plant biologists, will think they see in the "Bold New Program" a chance to employ the talents they are idealistically eager to use for their fellow men. They will forget that our American corporations, our foundations, our medical missions, have fought mosquitoes, and cured hookworm and started co-operatives, in undeveloped countries, in the most magnificently generous gifts to less fortunate peoples that have even been made by any nation. Our youth will not realize that if we turn all our earnings over to government those private efforts will have to cease.

Could it be that the planners have planned it that way?

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A romantic plot, soothing words, endless repetition -- here are the essentials of Government advertising. As Gustav Stolper said, "No nonsense is so great that it cannot be built up into a potent political force by the sheer psychological magic of endless repetition."

The problem is to orchestrate the simple theme, by a series of fugue-like repetitions from many Government and private agencies.

Let us recall the drama as it was played for Bretton Woods. Herbert Bratter, formerly of the Treasury, said on March 17, 1945:

> "Secretary Morgenthau has frankly undertaken to sell the program to the nation. And by selling he doesn't mean any half-way publicity measures. . . . For months there have been articles by advocates of the fund and bank in all sorts of private and public publications. Thousands of reprints of these articles have been distributed.
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> "Columnists and radio commentators have taken lunch with the Treasury's Secretary, with Bretton Woods for dessert. The movies have not been overlooked. Government speakers have been dispatched to all parts of the country to address any group willing to listen. On one recent occasion the mountain was brought to Mohammed, when 105 pressure groups were invited to send representatives to an all-day lecture course in Washington."

We can watch the same techniques unfold again, but with experience they will be subtler and have a wider range. Teachers and ministers, club women and business men, will be invited not to Washington but on world tours to see how well our Potemkin projects are going, and to come back and tell their admiring townsmen.

And who is going to pay for all of this? The Department of State says the cost of the technical assistance will be "negligible". That is soothing. It says the cost of the needed capital is "indeterminate". No worry in that word.

Of one thing we can be sure. Most of the gigantic cost will never be traced. Direct requests under the "Bold New Program" can be very small because the President is now able to siphon money secretly from a hundred agencies. There are so many pipes leading in and out of bureaucratic reservoirs that no one, not even Congress, knows how many little rivulets are pouring money into the bold new stream. We are told that twenty-five agencies are already participating.

The plain people of Boston and Pittsburgh and Boise and El Paso will, like Atlas, carry the world on their shoulders, until their overburdened limbs and hearts collapse.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. 6, No. 32

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By Frank C. Hanighen August 10, 1949

HOOVER: Today (August 10) is Herbert Hoover's 75th birthday and the nation pays him deserved, albeit delayed tribute. It is true there has been much praise for him in the past three or four years, when he rendered great services to the United States and the world. But one recalls that Mr. Hoover enjoyed few eulogies in the Thirties and early Forties, when he stood adversity with great courage. We therefore, on this anniversary, wish to voice admiration for the man, particularly because he stuck to principles through years when the whole concept of principles in public and private life was derided by our political leadership; and to express gratitude to him for this example he set for others.

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CHINA WHITE PAPER: The State Department's "white-wash" paper on China is certainly one of its longest efforts in this line -- nearly 1100 pages and about as physically handy as a city directory. No mercy was shown newspaper correspondents and others desirous of studying, writing and speaking on the matter. The thick volume was suddenly given to the press at 2 p.m. for publication release the next morning at 11 a.m. One organization we know, after agonized consultation, decided to tear the tome into four equal parts for four staff members to wrestle with. Next week, Felix Morley will devote a full analysis to the document. In time, no doubt, many lacunae will be noted and will receive comment. For the moment, we limit ourselves to one of a highly interesting character.

At Yalta, in February, 1945, President Roosevelt sold out our ally China to the USSR. In a secret agreement with Stalin he effectively ensured that Manchuria should fall to Russia -- Manchuria about whose detachment from China we pressed Japan to the point of war in 1941. Mr. Acheson in the "White Book" says that we did not inform the Chinese Government of the betrayal until four months later, in June, 1945, when Ambassador Hurley was authorized to break the news in Chungking. At this point in the Paper, we can almost hear the State Department functionaries cough as they enter their apology for this extraordinary conduct. Acheson says that it would not have been safe, would have involved war security to impart the bad news to Chiang on the morrow of Yalta. What he apparently means is that a radio message to Chungking might have been intercepted and decoded by Japan. But any such explanation should be patently absurd: a personal messenger sent by plane could have performed the lugubrious mission.

A story, which we believe, makes the State Department excuse look even more absurd. According to Chinese sources no longer in this country, Mr. Roosevelt himself had no such elaborate inhibition as the State Department. On his return from Yalta, in March, he called the Chinese Ambassador to the White House and disclosed to him the sell-out of the richest Chinese province. From this one may draw several conclusions: (1) that the matter was heavily on the dying President's conscience; and (2) that he thought so little of the State Department that he did not bother to tell any of its officers. Also, we may reasonably assume that because one big story is not embodied in the thick volume, there are others which the Department either did not know of, or preferred to overlook. Indeed, it is already reported that the Chinese Government in Formosa is at work compiling a "Blue Book" which might be sub-

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titled "What the State Department Left Out of the White Book"; for our State Department's exploit in special pleading -- and no observer we know here considers it otherwise -- involves sins of omission as well as commission.

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LOBBYING: The current investigation of the "five percenters" has served to lift a corner of the curtain which has concealed the really fruitful area of what is called lobbying activities. Several years ago, this column took notice of the bill requiring registration of lobbyists in Congress. At that time we said that lobbying in the halls of the Legislative body was but a fraction of all lobbying in Washington; and that the most important business was lobbying in the offices of the Executive. We would be unable statistically to prove this. But we know of no seasoned observer in this town who doubts that it is true. Those who sought to police lobbying only on Capitol Hill suffered from a time-lag; they were thinking in terms of twenty or more years ago. The truth is that the Executive branch, with expanding administrative law and elastic powers to order and dispose, has become far more important in the eyes of special interests than the Legislature. The latter branch, of course, is by no means without importance, but bills emerge containing so many generalities that the Executive enjoys wide latitude. Hence those amiable lunches at the Carlton or Mayflower where lobbyists entertain Executive functionaries. Hence the power wielded by law firms headed by former Executive officials, or of former Democratic Members of Congress. How often do we hear of former Senator this or that, or former Administrator this or that who -- as the phrase goes -- "can walk freely into the White House", into offices of Cabinet members, or into the hundreds of offices in departments where billions of dollars are expended.

Indeed, here lies another factor in the growth of lobbying. The shift of the center of gravity power to the Executive has been followed by a vast increase in the complexity and size of that branch. So enormous and ramified is the bureaucracy that it requires an expert working full time to know its main thoroughfares, not to mention its by-paths. It can be argued that under the "Fair Deal", if the "five percenters" conduct their business ethically, they actually perform an essential service. A business man visiting Washington is usually lost in the maze of offices and needs guidance. Members of Congress who used to help constituents in this way can hardly cope today with the expanded field of the Executive.

Another aspect of the lobbying problem appeared last week, when Senator McKellar accused ECA Administrator Hoffman of illegally lobbying against amendments to the ECA bill and said that Hoffman could be prosecuted. The picture of lobbying is not complete until it is realized that lobbying by the Executive in the halls of Congress is one of the grand lines of this activity. Isn't it lobbying when the White House puts pressure on individual Members to vote for a particular bill, with threats to withhold patronage; or in assertions of "too many Byrds in Congress"? In this connection, we should mention the supplying of "informational data" to Members of Congress -- one of the sins so often laid at the door of private interests. Anyone who knows Capitol Hill is well aware that the horde of "economic analysts", public relations officers, etc., in the Executive offices is constantly providing arguments, statistics, quotations, etc., to Members who are supporting Executive-sponsored bills. By reason of its infinitely greater budget and staff, the Executive can render a type of service to its friends on the Hill, which private business cannot hope to rival.

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GOLD STANDARD: Once upon a time many years ago, "funny money" advocates propagated their theories by hand-written letters, or mimeographed sheets, in contrast to the dressy statements of the orthodox monetary spokesmen. It would be an exaggeration to say that the situation has been exactly reversed. But we are tempted to make such a comparison periodically on arrival of a letter from Mr. Philip M. McKenna,

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Chairman of the Gold Standard League (of Latrobe, Pennsylvania). Mr. McKenna's publication is hand-written, then printed in offset. It is nicely informal, and quite legible. But even if it wasn't, we would count ourselves lucky to be on his mailing list. Mr. McKenna is waging a very intelligent campaign against printing-press money, and he is allied with the "Economists National Committee on Monetary Policy", in a drive to restore the nation to the gold standard.

Our friend in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, is an evangelist in a world that appears too benumbed by Government double-talk to respond very actively, and often this sort of utterance sounds a little forlorn and hopeless. However, in a recent issue Mr. McKenna reproduced a piece which inspires hope by showing how relatively simple would be a return to what used to be normal monetary conditions. It is by Mr. John K. Barnes, formerly of the Wall Street Journal. Mr. Barnes demonstrates how the present depreciation of our currency can be cured as expeditiously as was the dollar after the Civil War, when it fell in gold value to a lower level than it has reached today. He recalls that the "greenbacks" issued to help pay for that war "were down to about 35 cents on the dollar". Due largely to Senator -- later Secretary of the Treasury -- John Sherman (brother of General W. T. Sherman), that depreciation was completely cured and the greenbacks were brought back to 100 cents on the dollar by January 1, 1879, under the Resumption Act of 1875. Barnes (and also McKenna) makes the point that in 1879 gold liabilities were four and a half times the amount of gold in hand in the Treasury; today they are less than twice. Mr. McKenna says, "Today we have in the Treasury 24.5 billions of gold valued at $35 per ounce. That is 50.4 per cent of our paper currency, compared to the legal minimum requirement of 25 per cent. That is absolutely and relatively greater than when we maintained the gold coin standard of money with all non-gold dollars redeemable to holders on demand. . . . That's plenty. . . . 'The way to resume is to resume', as Sherman said in 1875."

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DISMANTLING: Speaking of the Economists National Committee on Monetary Policy, we would like to mention the fine "Monetary Notes" issued by that organization and edited by Walter E. Spahr. These "Notes" sometimes contain important economic material other than that directly dealing with the currency problem. For instance, we find the following in the August number: "BONN ON 'THE REPARATION FIASCO'. From an article bearing this caption, by M. J. Bonn, in Bankers Magazine (London, May, 1949), pp. 403-404, 407: The Potsdam reparation plan has benefited Russia and perhaps Poland. She has extracted about $7 milliard [billion] capital equipment and is drawing about $500 million a year from current production. She has Sovietized 126 plants in her zone. The value of booty, loot and of the territory annexed will hardly ever be known. For the 15 per cent of Western equipment which she is entitled to she has returned goods to the value of $3.7 million.

"The non-Russian Allies have received up to December 31, 1948: From German foreign investments confiscated in Allied and neutral countries, and a few other small items (Group A) -- $178 million. From industrial equipment removal and merchant shipping (Group B) -- $129 million. Making a total of -- $307 million. About $30 million have gone to Russian satellites. France has received $38 million, the United Kingdom $64 million and the United States $67 million. During the period in question the United Kingdom spent $600 million and the United States $2 milliard on keeping the Germans alive. . . .

"The makers of the Potsdam agreement have called the Versailles reparation settlement a hopeless failure. Measured by their standards, their work is a super-failure. It will at its best, when the contested remnant of removed plants is turned into cash, net perhaps $400 million for the Western zone -- At Yalta they were expected to produce about $11 milliard. These $400 million have so far cost Great Britain and the United States 2.5 milliards."

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Book Events

The Case of General Yamashita, by A. Frank Reel. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. $4.00. Reviewed by J. M. Lalley.

The trial of General Tomoyuki Yamashita in Manila, just after the conclusion of the war with Japan, and the refusal of the United States Supreme Court to interfere, mark a great turning point in the history of American jurisprudence. In this fateful case the protective usages painfully developed over centuries were abandoned, and two novel doctrines of incalculable import were established: first, the ex post facto definition of crime; and, second, that neither participation in crime, nor even the knowledge of it, is necessary to establish guilt.

It was the elderly General Yamashita, who by an extraordinary combination of skill and good luck had conquered Malaya and Singapore with 30,000 troops against 100,000 British. In the late stage of the war he was given command of Japanese forces in the Philippines. Now, however, his luck had run out. He was fighting a hopeless struggle and he knew it. His communications with his troops were constantly disrupted, and he was obliged to shift his headquarters from place to place. On September 2, 1945, he surrendered with his forces in obedience to the command of the Emperor. He thus became a prisoner of war, but the protection to which this status entitled him under the Geneva Convention was utterly ignored. One month after his surrender he was placed on trial for his life before an American military commission headed by Major General Russell B. Reynolds, operating under a directive prepared by General MacArthur which, as Mr. Justice Rutledge afterwards observed, made it "a law unto itself". The most elementary rules of evidence were disregarded; the admissible testimony included rumors, reports, conjecture, third-hand hearsay, affidavits from persons not available for cross-examination and even an American propaganda film. Specifically, General Yamashita was accused of responsibility for the murders, rapings, mutilations and other atrocities perpetrated by Japanese troops against civilians in Manila during the seige of the city. The whole basis of the accusation was General MacArthur's doctrine, hitherto unheard of in warfare, that a commander is at all times and under all circumstances personally responsible for every action by any of his men. Therefore, Yamashita was found guilty even though it was shown (1) that the atrocities had not been committed by his own soldiers but by members of a Japanese naval force, and (2) that the presence of any troops in the city was contrary to his orders for the evacuation of the capital.

By what appears to have been pure accident it was General Yamashita's fortune to be represented by exceptionally able and courageous American counsel, of whom Mr. Reel, the author of this history, was one. In their effort to obtain the justice denied to the prisoner by General MacArthur's directive, they risked and incurred the anger of their superiors. Early in January, 1946, three of Yamashita's counsel, including Mr. Reel, appeared before the Supreme Court in Washington to argue their petitions for writs of habeas corpus and certiorari. It was nearly a month before the decision of the court was handed down, and apparently it followed long and acrimonious debate among the justices. The ruling of the majority, written by the late Chief Justice Stone, denied the jurisdiction of the court and rejected the petitions; but the bitter and eloquent dissenting opinions of Messrs. Murphy and Rutledge made it clear that the condemnation of Yamashita had been in wanton contravention of the Constitution, the Geneva Convention and the Articles of War. Yamashita, stripped of his uniform and decorations, was hanged in his prison on Luzon February 13, 1946. Meanwhile, the curtain had risen on the momentous tragedy of Nuremburg.

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